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NEWS RELEASE

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Utah Immunizations - Climbing To New Levels As National Infant Immunization Week Kicks Off

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Elementary students will scale a rock wall as they “go for the goal” of reducing vaccine-preventable diseases during a “Stop the Spots” event to be held Tuesday, April 16 at Galyan’s Sports & Outdoor Adventure, from 10:30 a.m. until noon. First Lady Jacalyn S. Leavitt will be there along with students from Rose Park’s Backman Elementary and others to kick off National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), a national effort to increase awareness to vaccinate infants and children against disease.

“Utah has made significant improvements increasing infant immunization levels from 64 percent in 1996 to the current 77 percent,” says Mrs. Leavitt. The First Lady will recognize such accomplishments as increased immunization levels among two years olds, and the growth of the Utah Statewide Immunization Information System (USIIS), a computerized information system that maintains immunization records. USIIS has more than 850,000 patient records representing 76 percent of all Utah children.

“Each year, about 46,000 children are born in Utah, and children need 80 percent of their immunizations during their first two years of life to protect against disease, disability, and even death,” says Linda Abel, Immunization Program Manager, Utah Department of Health. “It is important that we continue to implement proven strategies to maintain and increase immunization levels.”

In recognition of NIIW, April 14-20, counties and local immunization coalitions across Utah will stage “Stop the Spots” events in childcare settings, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) clinics, community health

- MORE -

Page 2 of 2 — Utah Immunizations - Climbing To New Levels As National Infant Immunization Week Kicks Off

centers, schools and health departments. NIIW is an annual observance that highlights the importance of timely immunizations and focuses greater attention on efforts conducted throughout the year to raise coverage levels.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, vaccines are among the 20th Century's most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only protect a vaccinated individual from developing a serious disease, but also help protect the entire community by reducing the spread of infectious disease. Although disease levels are at all-time lows and immunization levels are higher than ever before, the potential for outbreaks still exists. Just ten years ago a measles epidemic swept across the nation leading to 55,000 cases of measles, 11,000 hospitalizations and more than 120 deaths.

“Many people today have never seen diseases such as polio or haemophilus influenzae type b thanks to vaccines,” says Dr. William Cosgrove, M.D., Cottonwood Pediatrics and Chair of the Private Provider Committee of the Every Child By Two Task Force. “Immunization is a simple and cost-effective way to protect children from 12 infectious diseases.”

For more information on immunization, call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659. For information on [Stop the Spots](#) events, contact the Utah Immunization Program at (801) 538-9450 or your local health department.

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